

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2300

As Passed House:
February 17, 1998

Title: An act relating to educational pathways.

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to educational pathways.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Johnson, Keiser, Huff, Talcott, Hickel, Carrell, Linville, Lisk, Veloria, Skinner, Cairnes, Mason, Lambert, Mulliken, Backlund, Mitchell, Wolfe, Constantine, Kastama, Kenney, Gardner, Benson, Ogden, Butler, Carlson, Kessler, Costa, Anderson, Conway, Lantz and McDonald).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/13/98, 1/27/98 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/17/98, 96-0.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Linville; Quall; Smith; Sterk; Sump; Talcott and Veloria.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background: Some school districts have instituted different ways to organize the curriculum in high schools, junior high schools and middle schools. One organizational model is called educational pathways. Through educational pathways, districts attempt to cluster courses around certain themes. For example, one school has pathways in arts and communication, health careers, business and marketing, social services and education, and sciences and technology. Within each pathway, students have a variety of options available. For example, students may enter a tech prep program, or running start, or take the types of courses needed to meet college entrance requirements, or engage in work-based learning. Educational pathways are intended to allow students to focus their time in secondary education and to organize their courses in ways that meet future career goals.

The 1993 education reform act assumed that most students would successfully pass their high school assessment when the students are about 16 years of age. Successful completion would lead to the acquisition of a "certificate of mastery." While students must have a certificate of mastery in order to earn a high school diploma, the legislation suggested that its acquisition would not be the sole criterion for graduation. The reform act directed schools to provide students who had earned a certificate of mastery with an opportunity to pursue career and educational objectives. The schools would provide these opportunities through educational pathways that emphasize the integration of academic and vocational preparation. The pathways could include a variety of programs such as work-based learning, tech-prep, running start, school-to-work transition, vocational-technical education, and preparation for entrance to an institution of higher education.

Summary of Bill: Middle, junior high, and high schools that use educational pathways shall ensure that all participating students will continue to have access to courses and instruction needed to meet entrance requirements at baccalaureate institutions.

Every student must be permitted to enter the educational pathway of the student's choice.

Before a student is accepted into an educational pathway, the school will provide the student's parent with information on three facets of the pathway. The information will include: the pathway chosen, opportunities available to the student through the pathway, and any career objectives that the student will be exposed to while pursuing the pathway. If a student or the student's parents are not satisfied with the opportunities available through a selected pathway, the student must be permitted to transfer to any other pathway provided in the school.

Schools are not permitted to develop educational pathways that retain students in high school beyond the date that the students are eligible to graduate. In addition, schools are not permitted to require students who transfer between pathways to complete pathway requirements beyond the date that the students are eligible to graduate.

The requirements for educational pathways are included in two places in the law. The language is added to requirements that govern the work of the Commission on Student Learning (CSL). The requirements for the commission will expire on June 30, 1999, when other statutes governing the commission expire. The language is also added to laws relating to students. Language in current law describing some examples of educational pathways is also added in the student section to the language governing pathways.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Educational pathways help students to understand why they are taking certain classes. This legislation recognizes the legitimacy of pathways and provides students and parents with information on curricular options. It preserves a student's option to select the pathway of choice and to change pathways when the student wishes to do so. It also enhances the dialogue surrounding the years that follow acquisition of a certificate of mastery. The legislation helps to solve problems that parents have brought to legislative attention.

Testimony Against: Although the protections contained in the legislation are very good, they would be better contained in the Superintendent of Public Instruction guidelines rather than in law. The Legislature does not need to dictate the level of specificity in this legislation. It should instead set clear targets, give districts the flexibility to meet the targets in a variety of ways, assess the results, and hold districts accountable for those results.

Testified: Dan Steele, Washington State School Directors' Association (concerns); Bob Butts, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (con); Rainer Houser, Association of Washington School Principals (pro); and Bruce McBurney, Washington Vocational Association (pro).